"A Woman's Work is Never Done" ~ Can Policy Value Caregiving?

A Forum Report
March 2000

"Caregiver" Kathryn Belzer, Works in Fibre

Nova Scotia
Advisory Council
on the Status
of Women

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About the Council

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established by provincial statute in 1977. The Council's mandate under the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act is to advise the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia.

The Council's work touches on all areas of women's lives, including...

- ♀ family life
- ♀ economics
- ♀ legal rights
- ♀ sexuality
- ♀ health
- ♀ education
- ♀ paid and unpaid work
- ♀ violence

Council pays close attention to the experiences of women who face barriers to full equality because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, ableness, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

We are committed to voicing women's concerns to government and the community through policy research, information services and community development. Working cooperatively with women and equality-seeking organizations, our mission is to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women.

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Preface

This report is designed to start conversations about the unpaid caregiving work done by women across Nova Scotia. When you look at some of the research reported here, you may well think "Now I know why I'm always so tired!"

On March 10, 2000, about 70 people from the general community, business, labour, government and volunteer sectors met in Halifax to talk about the research on unpaid work and caregiving and the questions it raises. We thank all the participants, particularly Joan Hicks who was our facilitator for the day, and all our panelists and guest speakers.

Between audience and presenters, we had a world-class event to celebrate International Women's Week 2000, and we were only sorry that we could not have many more participants with us. The purpose of this report is to bring more Nova Scotians into the public dialogue, to share what was said in the forum, and to learn the thoughts of other Nova Scotians on these vital matters.

As one participant put it, these issues are not just something to talk about in a rented meeting room in downtown Halifax. They need to be talked about at your neighbour's kitchen table or while you're sitting with friends in your back yard.

We hope this report will encourage that kind of talking. It includes information we have gathered and questions we need you to answer. We hope you find both useful and that you will pass along your answers, thoughts, or ideas to us.

As you read what the people at the forum had to say, you will see that there are many different views on how to improve matters. We are not making any particular recommendations at this time, but would very much like to have your opinions too.

P Doyle Bedwell

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Introduction

"Woman's Work is Never Done"~Can Policy Value Caregiving? It's a hard question to answer. If the answer is yes, the next question is even harder: how?

Think of the unpaid jobs everyone takes on every day. They may not be unpleasant and you may not think of them as "work." They could include picking up the children at school or doing your grandmother's grocery shopping. You might volunteer at a hospital, help to improve your neighbourhood, work on environmental projects, or leave your paying job to take care of a sick or elderly relative. There are costs and values associated with all caregiving work, but few accepted ways of measuring them.

GPI Atlantic is a research organization working to develop GPI, or Genuine Progress Indicators, for Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women supports the use of the GPI because, instead of looking only at amounts of money earned and spent, the GPI includes the value of unpaid work, environmental quality, and other factors to reflect the overall health of the economy and the society.

For example, research by GPI has found that unpaid housework and childcare in Nova Scotia is worth $8.5 billion a year (1997). That is 25 percent more than the value of the 707 million hours Nova Scotians worked for pay in 1997. Yet unpaid work does not show up in the traditional measures of the economy, such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For example, hiring a housekeeper contributes to the GDP, but cleaning the house yourself does not.

Women most often perform unpaid caregiving work. Despite a doubling of women's participation rate in the labour force, women's share of unpaid housework has hardly changed in 40 years. When we look to the future, we see that houses are getting larger and families are getting smaller. The population is aging, ensuring that elder care will place more and more demands on both paid and unpaid caregivers.

- What does it all mean?
- Are we fine the way things are?
- Should there be some changes made in government policy and thinking about unpaid work?
- If so, what should those changes be and who should pay for them?

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women organized this forum as part of its mandate to explore women's concerns and to advise the government. We'd like you to consider the questions and issues raised in this report. If you're discussing this with friends or in a group, you might like to try the following exercise:

1. List the different types of unpaid caregiving you've done in your life up until now.
2. Is your list of responsibilities and chores longer than you thought it was?
3. What has unpaid caregiving meant in your life? (e.g. what were the positive and negative consequences for you and for others?)
4. What kind of caregiving do you expect to do in the future?
5. What do you think this will mean for your life?
6. If you're discussing this in a group, try talking in pairs about your caregiving experiences. You may be surprised how much your stories are similar when you hear someone else tell the tale. Share each other's stories with the rest of the group and discuss how these issues affect you.

The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Honourable Jane Purves, had some opening comments for the forum.

Jane Purves said:

...While working conditions for women may have improved, there is a lack of appreciation for the notion that work for most women doesn't end at the door of a factory or office. Despite a significant increase in the number of women with jobs outside the home, women still shoulder most of the caregiving...

Caregiving is significant and important work. It is vital to the maintenance of family life and the welfare of individual family members. Caregiving is also essential for the future well-being of our province and our country. That said, then, why is most of the responsibility borne by women? Despite the fact that we know instinctively that caregiving is valuable and important work, it has gone largely unrecognized and unacknowledged. I can only assume that it's because mainly women do it...

...As you meet here today, there is a particular question to be answered. How, as a province and a nation, can we meet (the challenges of the 21st century) without compromising the progress women have made towards equality?

What was Said

The Morning Panel

In the morning session, the people at the policy forum heard from researchers in the area of unpaid work and talked about the questions their research raises. In the afternoon, we heard and talked about different ways to answer those questions.

The invited speakers for the morning were (in the order they spoke):

- Shelley Phipps, Department of Economics, Dalhousie University
- Ron Colman, GPI Atlantic
- Gail Bruhm, Family Caregivers' Association of Nova Scotia
- Margaret Dechman, Family Mosaic Project, Department of Community Services

This section contains the highlights of what the morning panelists had to say. The next section, Comments, Questions, and Ideas from Discussions, covers issues raised in the small groups of other forum participants.

There is more information on all the guest speakers and their work at the end of this report.

Shelley Phipps said:

Her recent research looked at how women's unpaid work affects women's paid work and focuses on women with young children.

Research shows Canadians aren't sure what to think about the effect of paid work on mothers and children. When asked in the mid-1990's "do you think a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works (outside the home)," almost as many people said yes, as said no.

She talked about the costs to women of their unpaid work and about the earning gaps between men and women. It is no surprise to hear that women working full-time in the labour force make 70 percent as much as men working full-time.

Then she pointed out that over their lifetimes, women who have had children earn only 87 percent of the amount earned by women who have never had children.

However, over their lifetimes, men who have had children make 134 percent of the amount earned by men who have never had children.

"This is referred to as the family gap...so there's a premium associated with fatherhood and a penalty associated with motherhood."

Women who have had children are likely to have spent time out of the labour force. Women are also the people most likely to take time off to care for the ill or the elderly. The negative effect on women's incomes is never overcome, particularly if a job interruption is followed by a change in job.

Other points to consider:

- Other countries offer more flexible programs, and extended eligibility for parental and/or maternity benefits.
- It has become more difficult to qualify for EI in Canada over the last ten years. The recent federal budget has made some improvements to the length of parental leave so that parents who qualify for EI can take off more time, but fewer parents are able to qualify.
- Norway offers flexible maternity leave--you can go back to work part-time and collect partial benefits for a longer period.

Ron Colman said:

His research looks at issues of unpaid work in Nova Scotia in relation to the Genuine Progress Index, or GPI (see introduction). He said the main effect of failing to "count" the value of unpaid work is simple: "Things that count for nothing don't find their way onto the policy agenda."

Women's participation in the labour force is rightly seen as a sign of liberation, but at the same time women's free time has been declining in the last 20 years. Because unpaid work is ignored in our measures of progress, the fact that women are working longer hours isn't seen as an issue.

Other points to consider:

- Working mothers perform an average of 73.5 hours of paid and unpaid work every week.
- Working single mothers put in more than 75 hours a week.
- Statistics Canada measures the GDP every month, it measures unpaid work only once every six years.
- Statistics Canada conducts "time use surveys" every six years. The surveys show that rates of time stress are going up across the population.
- Some of the highest rates of increase are among young people; and highest time stress of all is among young women.
- Thirty-eight percent of working mothers are classified as severely time stressed. This stress has health impacts: heart disease, gastrointestinal and immune system problems among others.
- Working single mothers spend three times the proportion of their income on childcare, compared to working mothers in two-parent families. Often it is not a practical option for many single mothers to work for pay.
- The fact that the unpaid work of unemployed single mothers "counts for nothing" is a partial explanation for the high poverty rate.
- Part of the reason women earn less than men do is that "women's work"--work traditionally regarded as free--fetches such low rates of pay in the marketplace.

Gail Bruhm said:

Many caregivers "don't consider themselves volunteers...it is just what they do....They would want me to tell you how much satisfaction and pride they gain from caring for their family members, friends, and neighbours, but they can't do it alone."

The trend in Canadian health and continuing care policy is to shift care from institutions to communities--not just for seniors, but throughout the life span. Most caregivers are women. Their burdens are financial, social, and personal, and caregiver burnout is a major problem.

Caregivers need time off from paid work and flexible work schedules. Employers must learn to adjust policies on benefits, career development, and pensions.

The federal government recently extended maternity leave to one year. Family leave provisions should cover workers who have to leave the labour force to care for family members of any age.

Caregivers should have input into policies affecting them. Some examples:

- Many caregivers find themselves dependent on the pensions of the elderly relatives for whom they provide care. What happens when the relative dies?
- Allowances or Guaranteed Annual Income for the work they do that subsidizes changes to the health care system.
- Compensation for expenses like renovations, transportation, special supplies, drugs, and respite care.

Margaret Dechman said:

Her focus is on child-rearing and the experiences of mothers. She sees women facing an "all or nothing" attitude. That attitude says: if you are a mother, you can't expect to be a good employee; if you are employed, you can't expect to be a good mother.

"All or nothing" assumes mothers either work outside the home or stay at home. In real life, most mothers belong to both categories at different times.

Forty-two percent of mothers questioned by the Family Mosaic Project said they had resigned from at least one job because of family demands or responsibilities. Two-thirds said they worked part-time at some time while raising their children, and most said they worked part- instead of full-time because of family responsibilities.

Even when fathers play an active role in parenting, the kinds of caregiving that tend to be mothers' responsibilities are precisely the kinds that are likely to take them away from their jobs unexpectedly: illness, for example. Fathers are more likely to take their children to special events. Those things are easier to plan for, but no more important.

Policy has to focus on outcomes--higher school completion rates, for example--rather than on blaming parents, financial circumstances, or specific groups. This will bring people together rather than driving them apart.

Comments, Questions, and Ideas from the Floor

- The research presented by the panelists showed that caregiving through the life cycle remains, to a substantial degree, "women's work" and that women bear significant costs for doing it. The question is..."So what? Who is supposed to do anything about the situation? What can reasonably be done?"

After the morning and afternoon panels, people at the forum broke into smaller discussion groups to consider some questions (these are reproduced in full at the end of this booklet). Here are the highlights after the first panel:

The broad social and economic consequences or implications of unpaid work...

- Unless the unpaid work/paid work conflict is addressed, inequity will continue and worsen; for example, poverty rates among women will remain high.
- Lone parents face special problems of isolation, being forced to give up careers, losing connections with other adults.
- Look at the different obstacles faced by rural and urban women: the time it takes to travel, the distances between home and resources, the isolation and lack of support services.
- Unpaid caregiving work contributes to inequity within families.
- I don't understand why housecleaning has higher status and pay than caregiving.
- "Underground caregiving work" for pay is often a form of exploitation missing from the statistics, but there's no way to study or measure it....
- There needs to be a better appreciation of the fact that in many families, both parents have to work (not a choice) in order to adequately provide for family members.
- Masculinity is still linked to paid employment.

"Many women don't know they have a problem. If your grandmother got up and put a pebble in her shoe every day, and your mother did the same thing, you're going to put the pebble in your shoe too and not think about complaining."

"It's not even a glass ceiling; it's concrete."

- We need to recognize and address questions about gender roles and social attitudes toward women caregivers, including housekeepers and childcare workers.
- In conducting research, there is a need to look at the implications for various groups, such as Black, Aboriginal, and immigrant communities, and persons with disabilities.
- In looking at baseline research numbers, it is important to identify "who is in that group" with respect to race and abilities.
- It is very difficult for women who have disabilities given that it is assumed that they will be caregivers regardless of their disability merely because they are women.
- Women place a great deal of pressure on themselves to be all things to all people (superwoman syndrome).
- One consequence is fatigue and ill health...especially for lone parents.
- Stress leading to poor health and more costs to healthcare and social systems, community and personal costs.

The kind of policy issues raised by the research...

- What can we do about the financial burdens on caregivers?
- The social assistance policy implications: is there economic and social punishment for unpaid and unvalued caregiving in the social assistance policy?
- What are the implications of "workfare" programs for childcare responsibilities?
- Requests for parental leave by men are viewed more negatively than requests made by women. Society and workplaces still view parental responsibilities as being that of women rather than men.

"I worry about rural women and men; it's hard to keep your self-esteem when there's no work."

- "Flexible work options" are often informal and don't help the people who don't know about them. Where such policies exist, they are often inconsistent and vary widely from office to office. They should be formalized and supported by businesses of all sizes and by government.
- Many people 50 to 65 are looking after an elderly parent. They're hard pressed to get into the workplace, because of ageism and other reasons. They depend on the pension of the elderly care

receiver, and live in dread of what will happen when the care receiver dies and they lose their income.

- Increased responsibilities at home are reflected in a cost to the volunteer workforce. For example, at one hospital, 85 percent of the volunteers are women. What happens if many have to leave?
- Caregivers did self-help groups for some time, then...the carers for caregivers wore out!
- Despite current "fiscal realities," a failure to address these issues will cost more in the long term, particularly with an aging population.
- It is easier to request and receive overtime than it is to get time off for caregiving responsibilities.
- Leaving a paid job to be a caregiver is often the same thing as a "forced" retirement.

Some ideas about what to do...

- Caregivers are not just a resource; the system and community should support them as well.
- Everyone should have a right to live up to his or her "educational potential" from cradle to grave--for example, there should be no cutoff (currently age 21) for free public schooling.
- People who are self-employed should be eligible for benefits like employment insurance and maternity leave.
- Canada Pension Plan should consider the value of unpaid work.
- There are different views on how to improve these problems--leading to conflict instead of cooperation.
- Look to all cultures for solutions; for example, the extended family.
- There are much better vacations and family leaves in most European countries...we should look there for solutions.
- Let's look to what other countries are doing about childcare.
- There's a critical need for greater awareness of issues, more public education instead of all of us complaining about how difficult it is.
- There needs to be more action on research that's out there!
- We need to recognize that women want to care, but we need choices and support for our choices.
- We need long-term vision instead of reacting to one crisis or another.

"Why is it on TV, when a guy is a caregiver, it's always a comedy?"

- We have to learn to "just say no"--challenge the status quo, the system.
- People directly affected by policies should have input into them.

Keynote Address by Pat Armstrong

Beyond Mother's Day: Restructuring Paid and Unpaid Work

Pat Armstrong said:

While many of the issues around caregiving haven't changed in a century, many others have. Some major changes in the 1990s:

- Lower birth rates, and an increase in elderly people cared for outside institutions.
- More professionals coming into our houses, assessing our standards of living, the ways we raise our children. Many of these people are women--tensions coming out of these situations can set women against each other and paid and unpaid work against each other.
- Massive shifts in employment and unemployment, for both women and men, with two-thirds of women with young children in the labour force.
- Changes in the kinds of caring work we expect to be done in the household. For example, our mothers and grandmothers didn't do catheters, IV's, and the other kinds of things expected now; neither were they expected to do some of the kinds of things we do for and with children today.
- Changes in ideology, to a "business model" for health care.
- Increasing inequality between rich and poor, between women and men.

These things make a real difference in how we talk about caregiving work in the year 2000.

Three strategies would help us work toward what a United Nations report calls "a strong commitment to preserving time and resources for care, and the human bonds that nourish human development."

"...there are real risks to demanding change, not just to ourselves, but to our families and relationships we're in...it's not easy."

First, recognize the value and skill involved in paid and unpaid caring work--and not just in the financial sense. In Finland, France, and Portugal, for example, it's been reported that "child minders" must take training.

Second, ensure that caring work is rewarded and supported, through rights, regulations, and legislation; universal public services; and financial support. It's important to work out how these affect pay equity. We shouldn't measure the value of housework by what we pay a housekeeper, because we continue to pay housekeepers so badly!

Third, recognize diversity. One size does not fit all. Institutions aren't always bad, and home isn't always the best place to be. Universal programs should offer a range of services, rights, and financial supports for women in different places and with different needs.

Don't "go mad"--get angry!

Comments, Questions, and Ideas from the Floor

- "I think we have to learn to say no...and if it means the difference between someone coming home and someone staying in the hospital, well, guess where they're going to have to stay?...They're going to have to plug up a bed until (I get support)....People have to have a choice and, if I'm working, I can't be home changing dressings and doing all that other stuff. We have to have a better system...it's dragging us down. So try not be bullied by the hospital system when they say you "have to" take your father home."

- "When my husband was dying of a brain tumor and he was hooked up to a feeding tube and a catheter...the nurse, social worker, and others wanted me to take my husband home. I just said no, I can't do that. But the bullying I felt! Where do you get the courage? Where do you get the support?"

"I worry about our elderly parents. They know we're stressed and hate to ask for help. It lowers their self-esteem. They don't want to be a burden."

- "My cousin was told...if she didn't take her dad home, she'd be charged for that bed."

- "It's time people stood up and started taking account of this....Policies (have to be) changed by people who know what the effects of changes are going to be. And I know with workloads it's very difficult to take time to sit down and listen to what's going on but we have to support each other and support women candidates who know what we're going through."

- "I get scared sometimes, thinking it would be great to make waves, but am I going to hurt myself and my family in the process?"

Pat Armstrong's response:

"Women who provide care try to make up for inadequacies in the changing health care system and they have...camouflaged the real impact of these cuts until they've gotten really bad--they work overtime, they don't take breaks, they steal extra sheets to have clean sheets, they use all kinds of strategies to cover up for the inadequacies in the system, which is good for the patient but in the long term is killing to the provider, and the real consequences of "reform" are camouflaged.

"...What we need to do is dare to dream....We have been confined to the notion that we can't afford it...when what we have to think about is what would work, and then figure out how to get there...

"What 'costs too much' is women getting sick because they can't provide enough care, can't provide care to patients or to children who are in trouble...that costs a lot of money we can't even put into statistics...

"Women advocate strongly for others, but not for themselves."

"We have to recognize that there are real risks, and not just for ourselves but for our families and the relationships we're in...It's not easy...(but it's also) important to see the point where you have nothing to lose...

"We shouldn't start by assuming we can't, by emphasizing our weaknesses or the risks, and we shouldn't...ignore the problems, but I think we have to take some risks, make some demands. We have to recognize our differences and figure out what we share, so we can move ahead in ways that allow us to have voice and choice."

The Afternoon Panel

The afternoon panelists were:

- Meg Luxton, Women's Studies and Social Science, York University
- Kathryn Spracklin, Mothers Are Women
- Elizabeth Beale, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council
- Maureen Shebib, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Meg Luxton said:

People know what's needed to give more value to women's unpaid caregiving work. What's missing is the political will to make it happen. For more than 50 years, there has been research on the division of domestic work and most say the same thing: "Men are doing more around the house; they didn't do much before, but they're doing more now."

However, while there are exceptions, there is no general movement toward men taking on more unpaid caregiving and housework.

It's important to look at ways to get men to take up more of that work, but it's hard to talk about. "It's easy to dump what's actually a social problem on individuals"--a kind of "privatizing." The issue becomes "How come you don't wash the dishes?" and pits men and women against each other.

Broader cultural values discourage men from taking on caregiving work– it's not socially acceptable.

But there is also an economic rationale for the way things are: the lower income earner in a couple (usually the woman) is also often the one who stays home....This points to the importance of pay equity programs.

We mustn't underestimate the fact that women spend enormous amounts of time--and enormous amounts of unpaid labour--in ways that free up other people's time and create profit for other people. If women demand to get paid better for all the work that we do, it's going to cost somebody.

We need to get involved in actions that will make politicians and corporations take notice...for example, the World March on Poverty and Violence, or even a consumer boycott of companies that exploit women.

Kathryn Spracklin said:

"As a feminist mother who has spent eight years focused on unpaid work, I worry about my future. Statistics say my decision will make me economically vulnerable for the rest of my life."

Equality requires policies that will divide unpaid responsibilities fairly between men and women, families and communities, workplaces and governments.

The options cover several areas:

- Women should not be penalized or poor because they set a priority on caring for their children. Women must be able to move in and out of the workforce or work part-time without risking their economic security.
- There should be more and flexible policies on parental, maternity, and family leaves to promote financial independence. Family leave should be available to all caregivers, for family members at all stages of life. Recent changes to these areas in the federal budget are overdue and need to go further.
- Maternity and parental leave should be removed from the EI system, and benefit rates should be increased.
- The national child benefit should be replaced by a universal caregivers allowance for families with dependent children that is not subject to clawbacks.
- There is a need for further refinement of techniques to measure and value unpaid caregiving, for more frequent collection of data on unpaid work, and for the inclusion of this data in policy development.

Elizabeth Beale said:

The short answer to "Can policy value caregiving?" is "no," at least in the short run. The current climate doesn't welcome the idea of redistributing caregiving responsibilities. Responsibility for areas directly related to caregiving falls on the provinces, and Nova Scotia's provincial deficit means we must anticipate cuts, not increases, in areas like community services and health.

On wider issues like pensions and social programs, there is little willingness to move and it is unrealistic to expect otherwise. It might be more useful to find ways to smooth the transitions between unpaid and paid work.

How can we bridge the gap that opens between men and women's pay after women's paid work is interrupted by child rearing?

- Employers could recognize how unpaid work develops "multi-tasking," to encourage more flexible work arrangements, and remove restrictions that stop part-time workers (often women) from being promoted.
- There are few women in senior management in Atlantic Canada, which means a shortage of mentors and employers who understand the demands of caregiving.
- Government should look beyond training programs aimed at people on EI. Those programs don't help people who have been out of the labour force for a long time. There should be a special focus on programs like upgrading, literacy, life skills, and job supports.
- Individuals have responsibilities too, to keep developing skills, perhaps through volunteer work, and to remember that technical, math, and business skills are important. Young women especially have to focus on these areas, and schools should encourage young women to focus on math and technology skills.

Maureen Shebib said:

As a lawyer with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Maureen wanted to make clear that she wasn't putting forth Commission policy, but her own opinions on the issue.

Thinking of unpaid work and the issues discussed today as 'economic rights': Can these be considered through a human-rights lens?...To a large extent the answer is "no."

Human rights legislation in Nova Scotia provides some protection from employment discrimination based on family status, but it focuses on paid work in the paid workforce and doesn't look at unpaid caregiving work directly.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights and some other UN conventions do refer to basic social and economic rights, but valuing or recognizing

unpaid work isn't one of them. Furthermore, these economic rights are not enforceable in the same way as domestic human rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So there is no constitutional or human right to economic equality in Canada or anywhere else that she knows about that is actually enforceable. Without that right, it's hard to find legal remedies for inequality. In a world of globalization and capitalism, it's also not likely the right will be established any time soon.

When we talk about capitalism and the dominance of corporations as the culprits, we should remember that most of the corporations we're talking about are publicly traded, and that shareholders have to be kept happy. Many of us are those shareholders through our RRSP's and other investments. We are more implicated in the "corporate economy" than we sometimes like to think about.

Over the last thirty years of human rights legislation there have been some "very, very important gains for women...." There has been removal of some barriers for women, especially in the workplace. "We've come a long way, but we've just about reached the end of the line in terms of what human rights legislation can do about the kind of situations we're looking at here today."

Comments, Questions, and Ideas from the Floor

After the second panel, people in small groups discussed what policy options and choices should be considered by employers, governments, and other public institutions. They also talked about what individuals and groups could do advance these options. Here are some of their comments and ideas:

Policy options for employers and others in the private sector like unions, childcare centres...

- Employers should realize the benefit of flexible work options like telework and flextime--reduced fatigue and stress in workers.
- Family leave options shouldn't just be focused on childcare: eldercare is important as well and becoming more so.

"Family leave where I work is five days a year--but just try and get it!"

- Unions have a responsibility: family-friendly policies should be on union agendas...every contract.
- Businesses get and keep good staff with "family-friendly" policies.
- Some current "family-friendly" policies aren't applicable to caring for an older person.
- Family leave vs. personal leave: family leave often refers only to dependent spouse, parent, child. The personal leave leaves it up to you. If you want to deal with the reality of people's lives and caregiving, we should talk about personal leave.
- We need to examine the diversity of cultures in this country and think about varying definitions of extended families. The term "family" means something different to persons of Aboriginal origin than it means to persons of the dominant white culture.
- Personal leave (instead of family leave) is more inclusive and improves morale for those who may have responsibilities beyond traditional "dependents" under the more strictly defined "family leave."
- Make sure women who take maternity leave aren't penalized for absence.
- Shorter workday and shorter work week for all employees (shorter working time means more time to spend with family and/or caregiving responsibilities).
- Employees should own their pension plans. They contribute so they should have a voice in where and how the money is invested.
- Pensions should be transferable.
- There should be pro-rated benefits in pay for part-time workers

"What is family-friendly policy anyway? All policy affects families of different types."

Policy options for governments and public institutions like schools, universities or hospitals...

- Family and maternity leaves should be outside the EI system. EI is not the right vehicle for this.
- Self employment requires benefits...women have tougher requirements when they're self employed.

"We've been advocating for a universal childcare policy since 1945 and it gets ignored in every budget."

- A fairer tax system, national childcare, comprehensive system of maternity leave, changes to transfer payments are "big-picture stuff." We need ideological change and a political will to make these kinds of changes.
- There should be quality childcare--universal, with national standards. Quality eldercare as well, with respite care for caregivers.
- Beyond a National Child Care Agenda, we should develop a National Family Care Agenda, that takes the needs of eldercare and care of the sick and disabled into account as well.
- Universal and affordable daycare... and daycare centres that operate on a 24/7 basis.
- The Guaranteed Annual Income should be back on the policy agenda.
- Educational policies and facilities should be more flexible.
- Student loan programs should be more flexible.
- There's a link between unpaid work and paid work...low valuation. There should be better labour standards for nannies and home care workers, for example.
- There should be more money for social housing.
- There should be caregiver allowances and tax relief for caregivers.
- Policymakers should adopt the "multiple bottom line"--consider social, environmental and cultural effects and outcomes of policy as well as the financial effects. This concept should be more entrenched in policy-making if we hope to change our belief systems.
- When proposals are evaluated, we shouldn't just look at dollars, but consider outcomes.
- We need a policy framework to ensure outcomes recognize the value of caregiving.
- Value of women's caregiving has to be looked at in the consequences of policy, in policy evaluation, and in program implementation.

"Flexibility in education has to be my flexibility. I'm getting a 'degree on Mondays'–the only day I can take any courses...the only day I'm free."

"With the emphasis on early childcare, policies and workplaces aren't even starting to address the questions around raising teenagers!"

What can individuals and groups do....

- Reach out to rural women, lone parents and other isolated caregivers.
- We should talk more about the long-term social and economic costs of unpaid caregiving. If we can show business and government that there's a real advantage to bringing in better caregiving policies, I think we would be further ahead.
- There should be a financial and social benefit for being a good corporate citizen. Companies with these policies should be supported, promoted in public, and with tax breaks.
- We as consumers should be asking about whether the companies we buy from have family-friendly policies. If people "put some politics into shopping"...you'd see some changes.
- Develop the public's knowledge of, and support for, the National Child Care Agenda.
- We need more women in power but when individual women do get into positions of power, they have to play by the established rules of the "old boys' club" in order to stay in the game. They find it hard to support women's issues vigorously for fear of being ridiculed, marginalized, or otherwise excluded.

In Conclusion

Patricia Doyle-Bedwell said:

We've been meeting today in the presence of the Caregiver....a fibre sculpture by Kathryn Belzer. Kathryn says of her work:

> "Be it my planet, community, farm, family, or marriage, the same rule governs: the provider must be fed. Caregiver is about this rule. Caregiver is about nurturing and healing. It is a container of kindnesses. The supply must be replenished. Who will do it? If no one does, the provider will be starved, the cycle broken."

The Caregiver's message has been at the heart of Council's activities during this International Women's Week because the sculpture symbolizes all caregivers who envelop us in their arms like the wings of an angel and who do so with acts of kindness and encouragement. But their work often goes without notice or compensation. Like our sculpture, they too are often voiceless and faceless.

We've had the Caregiver with us because it is our task to restore their faces and their voices. We hope this forum has helped all of us here today to do just that.

Really valuing caregiving, though, will not happen overnight....It could take a generation or more and it will not happen at all unless we all play a part and make our voices heard. That's why we'd like to hear from you with your ideas about what the Advisory Council could be doing and about the kind of policies that we should be advancing to better value caregiving.

What do you think?

This report is full of questions. The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women wants your help to find the answers as we advise the Minister and government on what Nova Scotians think are the best ways to "advance equality, fairness, and dignity for all women."

What do you think about what the panelists and other speakers had to say? How would you answer the questions raised throughout this report?

Here are some questions considered in the small groups. You'll find some examples of how they answered them in the "Comments, Questions, and Ideas from the Floor" sections earlier...but how would you answer these questions?

Questions for Discussion

What are the implications of the information presented by the guest speakers?

What are the broad social and economic implications of unpaid work for women? For men? For children? For people of diverse backgrounds?

What policy issues are raised by the research? Some areas you might consider (but not be limited to) include taxation, health, home care, childcare, labour standards, etc.

In addressing these issues, what should be the goals and direction of future policies? How would these goals address women's equality?

What policy options should we advance?

What realistic policy options should be considered in order to recognize and value unpaid work?

What options and choices should be considered by:

- Governments (provincial and federal) and other public sector institutions?
- Employers and the private sector?
- Communities and organizations?
- Families and individuals?

What are the best options for the short term? For the longer term?

What "next steps" would you recommend for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women?

Please think about these questions yourself, or talk with friends and family, colleagues, and co-workers. Send your thoughts to the Advisory Council at:

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Notes on Guests and Speakers

Pat Armstrong is a professor of Sociology at York University; she co-authored one of the earliest analyses in Canada of women's paid and unpaid work, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and their Segregated Work*, first published in 1978. She writes on a wide variety of issues related to women's work and to social policy and has co-authored several books on health care.

Elizabeth Beale is President and CEO of Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. Her policy and research interests cover a wide range of topics related to the economy of Atlantic Canada including regional development strategies, interprovincial and external trade and labour market topics.

Gail C. Bruhm is a founding member of the Family Caregivers' Association of Nova Scotia, formed in 1998 to keep the issue of family caregiving on the policy agenda. She was the Project Manager for the Caregiver Research Project, funded by the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, which looked at the supports women caregivers use and how their caregiving role affects their health.

Ronald Colman, Director of GPI Atlantic, heads this non-profit research group and is constructing an index of sustainable development for Nova Scotia. The project has been designated as a pilot for the country by Statistics Canada. Dr. Colman taught political science at the university level for twenty years, and for five years he was a researcher and speech writer at the United Nations. He is the author of *The Economic Value of Civic and Voluntary Work in Nova Scotia* and *The Economic Value of Unpaid Housework and Child Care in Nova Scotia*.

Margaret Dechman is on secondment from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, heading the Family Mosaic Project, research co-sponsored by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and Human Resources Development Canada. The objective of the research is to better understand the social, economic, and family circumstances that promote positive outcomes for both mothers and their children.

Joan Hicks is an adult educator who volunteered to facilitate this policy forum. Joan worked for many years with the Halifax Regional Library and now works with the Prior Learning Assessment Centre. Joan has provided leadership and support to initiatives for women throughout her life, beginning with her participation on the Nova Scotia Provincial Steering Committee for International Women's Year. That group helped the Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women, as a result of which the Advisory Council on the Status of Women was eventually formed. Joan Hicks was also associated with the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for women, as the National President.

Meg Luxton is a professor of Women's Studies and Social Science at Atkinson College, York University. She has done extensive research and writing on women's work in the home including the ground-breaking book, *More Than a Labour of Love*, published in 1980. Recently, she co-authored a research report for the Canadian Policy Research Network, *How Families Cope and Why Policymakers Need to Know*.

Shelley Phipps is a professor of Economics at Dalhousie University. Her current research focuses on the health and well-being of Canadian children, international comparisons of social policy, poverty and inequality, and decision-making within families.

Maureen E. Shebib has been Legal Counsel to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission since 1996. Prior to that, she worked as a staff lawyer for Dalhousie Legal Aid, Program Coordinator of the Guelph-Wellington Sexual Assault Program, and was a part-time panelist on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. She is co-chair of the Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Committee of the Nova Scotia branch of the Canadian Bar Association.

Kathryn Spracklin has been a paid and unpaid policy researcher and analyst for *Mothers Are Women*, an Ottawa-based grassroots feminist organization advocating for the concerns of mothers. The focus of her work has been the technical, statistical and economic aspects of unpaid work, including measurement, valuation, and alternative economic indicators.

Definitions

Caregiving. Paid or unpaid physical labour, emotional or psychological support or nurturing a person provides, whether for a family member or an unrelated individual (e.g., a child, an elderly parent, a spouse, a friend, a patient or a client) which is focused on their physical, psychological or emotional well-being or development.

Equal pay for work of equal value. A wage system for female-dominated jobs which is based on a comparison of the wages for jobs which are male dominated and which assesses these jobs according to the skill, effort, and responsibility required to do the job.

Family-friendly policies. Workplace policies which enable people to accommodate their caregiving responsibilities (e.g., flex-time, parental/maternity leave, personal leave); social policies which provide services or financial support to assist people to care for dependent children or sick or elderly relatives (e.g., subsidized childcare, child tax credits, respite care).

Flexible work options. Flexible working hours which can accommodate different schedules and needs (e.g., to assist parents to accommodate childcare responsibilities).

Gender roles. The different kind of tasks and responsibilities assigned to men and women based on ideas about sex differences and on social expectations about what is appropriate behavior for males and females; social expectations about the kind of work, behavior and responsibilities which are appropriate for women and for men; sex based behaviors or attitudes men and women acquire because of social expectations.

National Children's Agenda. A proposal for a range of federal and provincial government initiatives designed mainly to address child poverty and child development but which also includes ideas and initiatives to assist parents to better balance employment and family responsibilities (e.g., various options for childcare).

Pay equity. A wage system which is based on equal remuneration for jobs which are substantially similar or which are assessed to be of 'equal value', regardless of whether the work is performed by women or by men.

Respite care. Programs that help caregivers to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities by providing a short period of replacement care so that the main caregiver can take a break.

Telework. Paid work which uses telecommunications and computer technology to link an employee with her employer and with customers so that her work can be done from any location (including home).

Unpaid work. Activities related to care-giving, family, home maintenance or volunteering which add social or economic value and which individuals often do without being paid, but which could potentially be 'bought' in the market by hiring someone to do them for you (e.g., laundry, house-cleaning, childcare, home help, driving a family member or friend to a doctor's appointment).

Suggested Readings

Alvi, Shahid
Eldercare and the Workplace
Ottawa. Conference Board of Canada. 1995

Anderson, M.; Parent, K.
Putting a Face on Home Care: CARP's Report on Home Care in Canada 1999
Toronto. CARP (Canadian Association for the Fifty-Plus). 1999

Bakker, Isabella; Status of Women Canada
Unpaid Work and Macroeconomics: New Discussions, New Tools for Action
Ottawa. Status of Women Canada. 1998

Campbell, Joan; Bruhm, Gail; Lilley, Susan
Caregivers' Support Needs: Insights from the Experiences of Women Providing Care in Rural Nova Scotia
Halifax. Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. 1999

Cheal, David; Wolley, Frances; Luxton, Meg
How Families Cope and Why Policymakers Need to Know
Ottawa. Canadian Policy Research Networks. 1998

Colman, Ronald
The Economic Value of Unpaid Housework and Child Care in Nova Scotia: Measuring Sustainable Development: Application of the Genuine Progress Index to Nova Scotia
Halifax. GPI Atlantic. 1998

Conrad, Margaret
Women, Work and Well-Being in Atlantic Canada, Halifax, NS, April 30 - May 1, 1998 (conference report)
Halifax. Mount Saint Vincent University. 1999

Eichler, Margrit
Family Shifts: Families, Policies and Gender Equality
Toronto. Oxford University Press. 1997

Flemming, Lee; Marshall, Janet [et al]
Sandwich Generation: Needs Assessment
Charlottetown. Seniors' Independence Program. 1994

Frederick, Judith A.
As Time Goes By: Time use of Canadians
Ottawa. Statistics Canada. 1995

Health Canada
Report on the National Round Table on Home and Community Care. February 10, 1999, Ottawa, Ontario
Ottawa. Health Canada. 1999

Human Development Report
Published for the United Nations Development Programme
New York. Oxford University Press. 1999

Keating, Norah [et al]
Eldercare in Canada: Context, Content and Consequences
Ottawa. Statistics Canada. 1999

Langille, Ethel; MacLellan, Marlene; Berrigan, Anne
Both Puzzle and Paradox: Support for Informal Caregivers in Atlantic Canada
Halifax. Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, Mount Saint Vincent University. 1998

McDaniel, Susan A.
Family and Friends: General Social Survey Analysis Series
Ottawa. Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division. 1994

McDaniel, Susan A.
Towards Family Policies in Canada with Women in Mind
Ottawa. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. 1990

Nigam, Sonya; Zanyk, Lisa
When Women Count: Resource Manual on Unpaid Work
Ottawa. Mothers Are Women. 1999

O'Hara, Kathy
Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories
Ottawa. Canadian Policy Research Networks. 1998

Phipps, Shelley
An International Comparison of Policies and Outcomes for Young Children
Ottawa. Canadian Policy Research Networks. 1999

Statistics Canada
Overview of Time Use of Canadians in 1998
Ottawa. Statistics Canada. 1999

Statistics Canada
Households Unpaid Work: Measurement and Valuation
Ottawa. Statistics Canada. 1995

Statistics Canada
The Daily, Tuesday March 17, 1998: 1996 Census: Labour Force Activity, Occupation and *Industry, Place of Work, Mode of Transportation to Work, Unpaid Work*
Ottawa. Statistics Canada. 1998

Stone, Leroy O.; Rosenthal, Carolyn J.; Connidis, Ingrid Arnet
Parent-Child Exchanges of Supports and Intergenerational Equity
Ottawa. Statistics Canada. 1998

Waring, Marilyn
Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth
Toronto. University of Toronto Press. 1999

Suggested Videos

Irving, Ron; Moses, David
Prince Edward Island Association of Social Workers
Elders Ourselves (25 minutes)
Charlottetown. Health and Welfare. 1991

- Through dramatizations, this video shows some of the tensions that can build up when an elderly person must move in with a family member in order to have proper care.

McGowan, Sharon Ann (Director)
When the Day Comes (28 minutes, 43 seconds)
Montreal. National Film Board of Canada. 1991

- The vast majority of elderly Canadians are taken care of at home by a family member, usually a wife, daughter or mother. These caregivers constitute an important, yet unofficial component of the Canadian health care system. *When the Day Comes* presents four women caregivers, each doing her best to tend to an elderly loved one. Their stories show how constant caregiving takes its toll. Fatigue, depression, and isolation are common symptoms. Although available in some Canadian cities, support groups and practical assistance programs are still rare. This powerful documentary illustrates the urgent need to improve and expand government and community services and resources for caregivers, in recognition of the vital role they play in our society.

*All items listed, with the exception of the UN Human Development Report, are in the NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women resource centre. The UN Human Development Report, referenced in Pat Armstrong's keynote address, is available at most university libraries in the Halifax area.